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Happy Easter! I preached via Zoom with my local church on Easter Day, and saw posts from other people who were in churches or gathered outside (all appropriately observing Covid rules). It reminded me that some of us may be feeling particularly “Together” whereas others of us are very much “Apart” at the moment. Personally I felt very Lenten through February and by the time I saw a little sunshine on the Wednesday of Holy Week, I was in celebratory mood.

As we all find out what our lives will be like through spring and summer, we may find ourselves out of step with others. No one, no one has ever been as out of step and in step with people as Jesus of Nazareth. He **is** risen, and not one of us is beyond His love.

Alleluia! With love and prayers for you

Claire, on behalf of the Arthur Rank Centre team

Hallelujah he is risen!

Bible reading: Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection

Hallelujah, Christ is risen!

Easter has finally arrived, bringing us hope after what has seemed like a long Lent!

The ending of Mark’s Gospel is a great cause of debate among scholars. This account of the resurrection doesn’t, on the face of it, give us much hope: the women were terrified and said nothing of what they had seen. Is this the real ending? Where do the other verses fit in? I remember an eminent scholar of Mark saying how convinced they were that this was the intended ending even in their undergraduate days. Others will be equally passionate in other directions.

Let us leave the discussion to the academics and concentrate on what these verses say to us. Self-evidently, the women did not stay quiet for long: how did the church begin if they didn't share what they had seen? What is Mark trying to tell us and how can that speak to us today?

The disciples are being sent back to Galilee, to where it all began. This is not a call simply to reminisce; for Mark, Galilee is the place of call for the disciples, the place their lives changed forever. Yes, they are to remember, but only so that they can start again on the new work they have to do.

Many of us in the rural church have not been in our church buildings for months, maybe not even since the first lockdown a year ago. What does it mean for us to be 'sent back to Galilee'?

Many of us will feel a temptation to simply get back to 'normal', but we know that things have changed during COVID. We have embraced new ways of doing things in the rural church. We've worshipped online and distributed service sheets for those unable to join in. We've connected with our communities in many different and practical ways. We have learned how to laugh and cry together.

As we return to our Galilees, let us experience them as places of call from across the generations. Let us listen to our past, both the recent and the long term, so that we can learn from it. What have we learned that we can take with us? What must we leave behind? We must put aside our fear and share the hope of resurrection with those around us.

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Prayer

God of Resurrection, who raised Jesus from the dead,
You have filled the world with your gift of hope.

We give you our thanks and praise.

Empower us to go out and share that hope with others.

May we walk with the risen Christ in the days ahead,
Knowing that he has called us to be his witnesses.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Response

- Share some spring flowers with someone in your community.
- Meet someone in their garden or on a walk and hear their lockdown story.
- Spend time praying for those whose lives have been changed completely by COVID.

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